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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement submitted by Sociologists for Women in Society, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS) is an international organization of sociologists dedicated to improving women's lives and creating feminist social change. Through our teaching, research, publications and activism, we educate and sensitize the sociological profession, other scholars and the public with regard to the social, political and economic problems of women. We publish a highly regarded professional journal, *Gender & Society*, and a quarterly newsletter, "Network News", and maintain a website, www.socwomen.org, that publicizes resources for the sociological community and beyond. Recent scholarly work in *Gender & Society* examines the issues of women and war,[1] intimate partner violence,[2] human trafficking and prostitution,[3] female genital mutilation[4] and women in United States prisons.[5]

2. As sociologists dedicated to improving women's lives, we strongly affirm strategic objective D.1 of the Beijing Platform for Action, aimed at preventing and eliminating physical, sexual and psychological violence against women and girls. Sociological research has underlined the social origins of violence against women and girls[6] and the need for Government intervention to protect vulnerable members of society.[7] In this regard, we express dismay over continuing and egregious violence against women and girls in situations of armed conflict, particularly the vicious sexual attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These organized attacks have targeted young girls as well as women, causing massive physical, psychological and social damage to the health and well-being of women and girls.[8] Armed combatants attack with impunity, confident that they will not be held accountable by police or judicial authorities.[9] The international response to such

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[1] Najafizadeh, Mehrangiz, 2003, "Women's empowering carework in post-Soviet Azerbaijan", *Gender & Society*, 17(2); Murphy, Erin L., 2009, "Women's anti-imperialism, 'the white man's burden,' and the Philippine-American war: theorizing masculinist ambivalence in protest", *Gender & Society*, 23(2).

[2] Schrock, Douglas P., and Irene Padavic, 2007, "Negotiating hegemonic masculinity in a batterer intervention program", *Gender & Society*, 21(5); Téllez, Michelle, 2008, "Community of struggle: gender, violence, and resistance on the U.S./Mexico border", *Gender & Society*, 22(5).

[3] Tambe, Ashwini, 2005, "The elusive ingénue: a transnational feminist analysis of European prostitution in colonial Bombay", *Gender & Society*, 19(2); Tambiah, Yasmin, 2005, "Turncoat bodies: sexuality and sex work under militarization in Sri Lanka", *Gender & Society*, 19(2).

[4] Wade, Lisa, 2009, "Defining gendered oppression in U.S. newspapers: the strategic value of 'female genital mutilation'", *Gender & Society*, 23(3).

[5] Lawston, Jodie Michelle, 2009, "'We're all sisters': Bridging and legitimacy in the women's antiprison movement", *Gender & Society*, 23(5).

[6] Berns, Nancy, 2001, "Degendering the problem and gendering the blame: political discourse on women and violence", *Gender & Society*, 15(2); Ampofo, Akosua Adomako, Josephine Beoku-Betts, Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi and Mary Osirim, 2004, "Women's and gender studies in English-speaking sub-Saharan Africa: a review of research in the social sciences", *Gender & Society*, 18(6).

[7] Mirchandani, Rekha, 2006, "'Hitting is not manly': domestic violence court and the re-imagination of the patriarchal state", *Gender & Society*, 20(6).

[8] Steiner, Birthe, Marie T. Benner, Egbert Sondorp, K. Peter Schmitz, Ursula Mesmer and Sandrine, Rosenberger, 2009, "Sexual violence in the protracted conflict of DRC programming for rape survivors in South Kivu", *Conflict and Health*, 15(3).

[9] Longombe, A. O., K. M. Claude and J. Rumingo, 2008, "Fistula and traumatic genital injury from sexual violence in a conflict setting in Eastern Congo: case studies", *Reproductive Health Matters*, 16(31).

blatant and organized use of rape as a weapon of war has been inadequate and ineffective, as illustrated by the Rwandan case.[10] The Beijing Platform for Action, in its strategic objective D.1, calls on States to prevent and punish acts of violence against women, and we strongly emphasize the pressing need for States to fulfil their responsibilities towards women and girls in conflict situations. In order to improve the international response to violence in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in other situations of armed conflict, we urge renewed attention to strategic objective E.1 of the Beijing Platform for Action: increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation. The Platform's paragraph 142 sets out the comprehensive agenda needed for the attainment of that objective.

3. The vulnerability of women to rape and other forms of violence begins in girlhood. A girl child is denied access to a healthy and meaningful life through such mechanisms as sexual abuse;[11] incest;[12] rape;[13] limited educational opportunities;[14] early entry into the labour market, both paid and unpaid;[15] early marriage;[16] and early pregnancy.[17] Gender discrimination in health and nutrition occurs throughout the life course of a girl child. For instance, the under-five mortality rate for girls exceeds that for boys in South Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, resulting in millions of "missing girls" in those regions.[18] Malnutrition affects girls much more than boys, stunting their future physical and mental growth.[19] Increasing rates of relationship violence[20] and sexual harassment of the girl child impede a healthy relationship with her body and prevent her from making her maximum potential contribution to society. We urge renewed attention to the appeals set out in the Beijing Platform for Action in its strategic objective L.5, for the elimination of discrimination against girls in health and nutrition, and its strategic objective L.7, for the elimination of violence against girls.

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[10] Bijleveld, Catrien, Aafke Morssinkhof and Alette Smeulers, 2009, "Counting the countless: rape victimizations during the Rwandan genocide", *International Criminal Justice Review*, 19(2).

[11] Nelson, Andrea, and Pamela Oliver, 1998, "Gender and the construction of consent in child-adult sexual contact", *Gender & Society*, 12(5).

[12] Atwood, Joan D., 2007, "When love hurts: preadolescent girls' reports of incest", *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 35(4).

[13] Jewkes, R., J. Levin, N. Mbananga and D. Bradshaw, 2002, "Rape of girls in South Africa", *The Lancet*, 359 (9303).

[14] Hannum, Emily, 2003, "Poverty and basic education in rural China: villages, households, and girls' and boys' enrolment", *Comparative Education Review*, 47(2).

[15] Dodson, Lisa, and Jillian Dickert, 2004, "Girls' family labor in low-income households: a decade of qualitative research", *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(2).

[16] Clark, Shelley, 2004, "Early marriage and HIV risks in sub-Saharan Africa", studies in family planning, 35(3); Singh, Susheela, and Renee Samara, 1996, "Early marriage among women in developing countries", *International Family Planning Perspectives* 22(4).

[17] Guijarro, S., J. Naranjo, M. Padilla, R. Gutiérez, C. Lammers and R. Blum, 1999, "Family risk factors associated with adolescent pregnancy: study of a group of adolescent girls and their families in Ecuador", *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 25(2).

[18] United Nations Development Fund for Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability*, New York, 2008.

[19] Choudhury, Kaneta K., Manzoor A. Hanifi, Sabrina Rasheed and Abbas Bhuiya, 2000, "Gender inequality and severe malnutrition among children in a remote rural area of Bangladesh", *Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition*, 18(3).

[20] Hall, Julie, 2000, "It hurts to be a girl: growing up poor, white, and female", *Gender & Society* 14(5).

4. When girls are subjected to systematic maltreatment and exploitation, the stage is set for abusive attacks on women, such as rape, in situations of armed conflict. We applaud Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which, according to the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Rachel Mayanja, changed the image of women in conflict situations from that of exclusively victims of war to that of active participants as peacemakers, peacebuilders and negotiators (see S/PV.5294). SWS looks forward to the tenth anniversary of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and can assist the international community in the areas identified by the Special Adviser as needing improvement: raising awareness about gender disparities, incorporating gender perspectives into decision-making and advocating for women and girls.